

HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION
STRUCTURE OF MERIT DESIGNATION REPORT
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806 ORANGE AVENUE
SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA
APN 037-024-009

Designation Status: Designated a historic Structure of Merit on September 16, 2020

Constructed: c. 1880s

Architect: Unknown

Builder: Unknown

Architectural Style: Italianate

Property Type: Residence

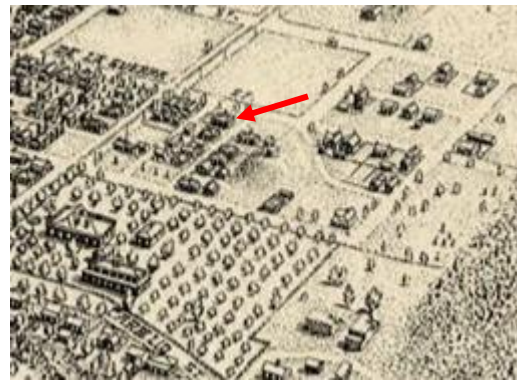
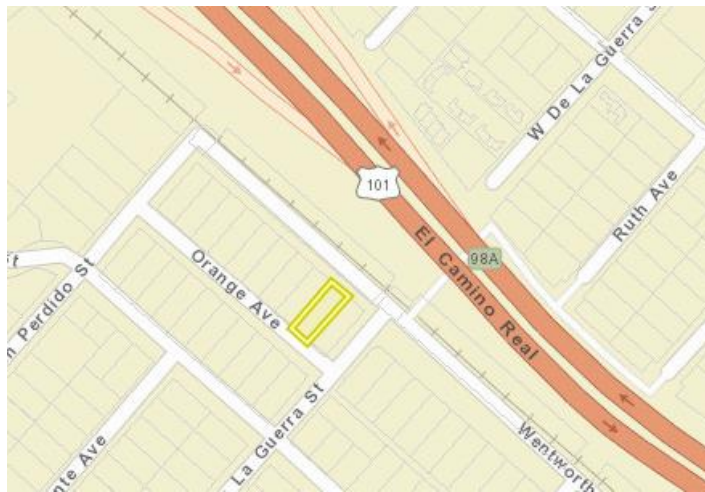
Original Use: Residence



View Eastward from street at Orange ave toward front elevation. WEST ELEVATION



2020 vicinity map showing the location

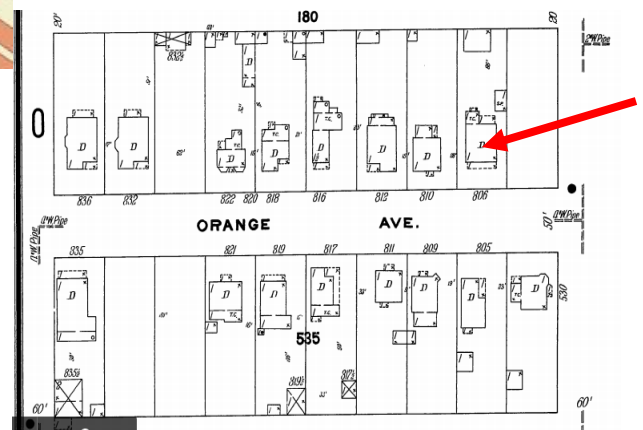


1898 Map showing 806 Orange Avenue and the development of Orange Avenue

Property Description: This one-story Italianate house has a low-sloped, hipped roof with small gable in the center. The house features wood, shiplap siding. A full width front porch with a shed roof supported by thin porch posts with beveled corners and decorative brackets. The house features pairs of two-over-two, elongated, wood windows with thick trim and sills. The front door is capped with a divided light transom. A tall brick chimney is on the side elevation.

A low, single course ashlar cut sandstone wall lines the streetscape that is topped with a wood picket fence.

Streetscape: The 800 block of Orange Avenue retains many of its original residential houses from the late 1800s to early 1900s and the street retains its historic character and setting. The street represents an intact,



1907 Sanborn map showing 806 Orange Avenue and development of Orange Avenue



Above and right: Photos of other houses on 800 Block of Orange Avenue dating to late 1800s



moderate-income, working class streetscape, one of the few intact on the west side neighborhood of Santa Barbara. The house at 806 Orange Street contributes to the visual and physical integrity of the street and is the type of residence typically found in the City's modestly scaled residential neighborhoods during the late 1800s.

Significance: City of Santa Barbara establishes historical significance as provided by the Municipal Code, Section 22.22.040. Any historic building that meets one or more of the eleven criteria (Criteria A through K) established for a City Landmark, or a City Structure of Merit can be considered significant. The structure may be significant as a Structure of Merit per the following criteria:

Historic Integrity:

The house was recently purchased and the new owner plans to restore the house to its original exterior condition, with almost all of the original materials and design still present. The original front door was replaced, however, the owner proposes to install a period appropriate front door to restore integrity to the house. The 800 block of Orange Avenue retains many of the late nineteenth to early 20th century houses so that the house retains its integrity of setting. The house has high integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, allowing it still to convey its original appearance.

Criterion A. Its character, interest, or value as a significant part of the heritage of the City, the State or the Nation:

As a city, Santa Barbara underwent massive growth during the 1870's when Italianate architecture was extremely fashionable on the West Coast. Nearly always built of wood, Santa Barbara's Italianates portray their strong tie to fellow Victorian styles, while showing their Italian reference through their low sloped roofs, symmetry, and expressive brackets. Italianate continues to command a prominent place in the look and feel of Santa Barbara's streetscape.

Criterion D. Its exemplification of a particular architectural style or way of life important to the City, the State or the Nation

The building exemplifies the Italianate style. It is a small, modest version of the style built as a working-class house, rather than the larger Italianate buildings closer to downtown designed for more wealthy patrons. The west side neighborhood has few remaining working-class cottages from the Victorian era.

Thanks in part to landscape architect Andrew Jackson Downing's pattern books, Italianate architecture was



Above and below: Photos of other houses on 800 Block of Orange Avenue dating to late 1800s



popular in California from 1870 to 1890. Nationwide, Italianate overshadowed Gothic Revival by 1860, but was curtailed by the financial panic of 1873. By the time the economy had stabilized, Italianate was supplanted by the new Queen Anne style. Like most of California, architectural styles took a while to travel from the eastern United States to Santa Barbara. For this reason, Santa Barbara's Italianate was at its peak from 1870 to 1880. In Santa Barbara the Italianate houses nearly always had wood siding as their main



wall surface, in part due to an abundance of lumber on the west coast. The earlier versions of Italianate usually had very large weatherboards for siding because until 1872, Stearns Wharf had not been built, and all wood had to be floated ashore. One of the chief champions of Santa Barbara's Italianate was the influential mayor and architect, Peter Barber (see the photograph at the top left of this page of an Italianate building he designed in Santa Barbara.) Several examples of Italianate architecture can be found in the Brinkerhoff Avenue Landmark District as well as dotted throughout upper west side of downtown along Chapala and De La Vina Streets. Referencing the Italian farmhouse and villa, the house at 806 Orange Street embodies the following features that are hallmarks of the Italianate style:

- Blocky architecture, with no curved walls and a symmetrical layout;
- A shallow, hipped roof that helps to set apart the Italianate from the other Victorian styles;
- Long, full-width front porch that extends the living area outside;
- Wide shiplap siding;
- Thin, square porch posts with beveled corners and ornate brackets;
- Two-over-two, elongated, wood windows with thick wood trim

Criterion G. Its embodiment of elements demonstrating outstanding attention to architectural design, detail, materials and craftsmanship.

The thin, square columns with beveled corners and decorative brackets; the elongated, wood, two-over-two windows; and wide shiplap siding demonstrate an outstanding attention to details, materials, and craftsmanship that are difficult to replicate and that exemplify the methods of construction, craftsmanship, attention to detail, and artistry of the Italianate style.

Sandstone wall: There is a one-course sandstone retaining wall abutting the sidewalk, lining the front streetscape. A feature that gives the region such distinction while offering a surprising and pleasing bit of artistry. Walls usually require far less engineering compared to bridges, so they offer more opportunity for stonemasons to express themselves and their artistry in the selection, carving, and setting of stones. Use of masonry for construction in the Santa Barbara area dates back to the time the Spanish arrived. Since it was necessary to travel some distance into the woods to obtain lumber,

but rocks were found scattered on the ground, stone became the preferred building material. The tradition of building with stones continued in Santa Barbara County through the 19th century. This method of construction was often chosen because local brown sandstone was readily available and easily transformed from round or shapeless boulders into symmetrical smooth faced stone for building purposes.

A local stonemason explained in July of 1883, “When a quantity of it is wanted, a blast of powder is drilled into the heart of one of the large boulders and exploded and a number of square edged building stones are produced” (Santa Barbara News-Press July 1883). Many residences, walls, bridges, and commercial structures were constructed out of local sandstone during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Immediately after World War I, Santa Barbara began a concerted effort to revamp its visual image. During this time, city planners carefully monitored all construction of any new structure to make sure it was consistent with the master plan that was based on Spanish Colonial Revival/Mediterranean streetscape mode (Conrad and Nelson, 1986: 14).

The use of a traditional building material, sandstone, in the construction of the walls built during this period was in line with Santa Barbara’s planning and design efforts. In the years from 1870 to 1940, when Santa Barbara was quickly evolving into a vibrant, growing city, the period witnessed an extraordinary explosion of stone construction made possible by the abundant supply of sandstone, cadre of expert masons, and financing by private citizens. This period provided an atmosphere conducive to the building of public and private spaces of all kinds, walls, bridges, gardens, and an assortment of other stone works and encouraged some exceptional expressions of the mason’s art. Among the most apparent expressions of the beauty in stone that give the region such distinction are the stone walls.

Conclusion: The house qualifies for Structure of Merit designation as it retains high historical integrity and meets criteria A, D, and G.

Works Cited:

Grumbine, Anthony, Harrison Design. Hernandez, Nicole. *Santa Barbara Style Guides, Italianate*. City of Santa Barbara, Community Development Department. November 2014.

Morlet, Aubrey, Applied Earthworks, Inc. “City of Santa Barbara, West Downtown Historic Building Survey.” City of Santa Barbara, Community Development Department. January 2012.

Santa Barbara Conservancy. *Images of America, Stone Architecture in Santa Barbara*. Arcadia Publishing, 2009.

Maps:

1898 Birdseye Map of Santa Barbara

Sanborn Maps 1907. Courtesy Gledhill Library of the Santa Barbara Historic.